• The quantity exported for commercial exports is being treated as advance freesale release to be adjusted after a period of 12 months from the date of release.

• The levy exemption on the quantity of sugar meant for commercial exports, if it cannot be availed by the sugar factory out of 1999-2000 season's production due to the completion of its levy obligation, may be availed by the concerned sugar factory from the production in the ensuing sugar season.

• DEPB at the rate of 5% of the F.O.B. value of exports of sugar has been allowed.

(vi) Government has decided to introduce futures/forward market in sugar.

Utilisation Certificates and Social Audit of Food items

2917. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to ask for utilisation certificates and social audit of the food items given to various States and under PDS;

(b) if so, whether State Governments have in principle agreed to give utilisation certificates to the Central Government;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) to what extent the social audit of food items is going to check diversion of food items allocated under PDS?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) to (d) With a view to devising a mechanism to ensure the foodgrains lifted by the State Governments from central godowns are actually distributed to the beneficiaries under the Targeted Public Distribution System,

the Government of India has suggested that future allotments of foodgrains be linked to the receipt of a certificate from the State Governments to the effect that the allotted quantities of foodgrains have been actually distributed to the beneficiaries. The Guidelines issued by the Government of India in regard to the Antyodaya Anna Yojana launched recently provide that the allocation of foodgrains to the States will be linked to the receipt of Utilisation Certificates from them to the effect that the foodgrains have been distributed to the Antyodaya families. In principle the States have agreed to the suggestion and have asked for a lead time of 3 to 4 months for submission of Utilisation Certificates.

The Government of India has advised the State Governments to substantially involve the Gram Panchayats in the supervision and monitoring of the Public Distribution System, especially at the Fair Price Shop level, as a measure of social audit. It is expected that the involvement of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the implementation of the Public Distribution System at the grass root level will make the System transparent and accountable and thereby help in checking the diversion of PDS commodities to a great extent.

Off take of food articles

2918. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether off take of the food articles being distributed through PDS has increased after the revision of PDS prices after this year budget;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what are the steps taken by Government to enhance the off take; and